

Message Text

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TAGS: ETRD, UR

SUBJ: PROPOSED "VISIT USA" PROGRAM FOR THE USSR

REF: STATE 296633

1. EMBASSY CONCURS WITH ASSESSMENT REFTEL THAT PROPOSED "VISIT USA" PROGRAM WOULD BE USEFUL FOLLOW UP TO CSCE (EVEN THOUGH COMMERCIAL IMPACT LIKELY TO BE MARGINAL), AND WOULD BE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN IT. US BICENTENNIAL, KNOWLEDGE OF WHICH SEEMS RELATIVELY WIDESPREAD IN USSR, OFFERS TIMELY SETTING FOR UNDER TAKING SUCH EFFORT.

2. IN ADDITION PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION AS CSCE FOLLOW UP, EMBASSY BELIEVES REFERENCE SHOULD BE MADE TO BILATERAL AGREEMENTS WHICH CALL UPON US AND USSR TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS FOR TOURISM, I.E., PRINCIPLE NINE OF BASIC PRINCIPLES OF RELATIONS SIGNED MAY 29, 1972 AND JOINT STATEMENT SIGNED AT END OF VISIT TO USSR OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR TOURISM WASHBURN IN SEPTEMBER 1974. INDEED, POSITIVE REFERENCE TO CSCE SHOULD BE SOMEWHAT RESTRAINED IN ORDER TO AVOID POLITICIZING PROGRAM WHICH IN ANY EVENT WILL BE VIEWED WITH SOME SUSPICION BY SOVIETS. EMBASSY ALSO NOTES THAT POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD COOPERATIVE VENTURES WITH US ON PART OF INTOURIST IS SOMEWHAT PROBLEMATIC IN LIGHT OF TURNDOWN FOR IBM LICENSE.

3. PROGRAM OUTLINED IN OCTOBER 30 CLARK LETTER TO THE
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SECRETARY IN GENERAL SEEMS APPROPRIATE, BUT WE OFFER THE

FOLLOWING SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS. POINTS A AND M COULD BE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO SOVIETS AND THEIR ACCEPTANCE SEEMS DOUBTFUL. POINTS C AND L, ON OTHER HAND, COULD BE ATTRACTIVE TO SOVIET TOURIST OFFICIALS. COMMERCIAL OFFICE WOULD BE GLAD TO OFFER PREMISES FOR PROPOSED SEMINAR, POINT C, BUT TIMING BEFORE JUNE 1976 MIGHT BE DIFFICULT. COMMERCIAL OFFICE ALREADY HAS "VISIT USA" WINDOW DISPLAY PROVIDED BY AMERICAN EXPRESS. POINT H RAISES QUESTION OF WHO WOULD ACTUALLY PAY FOR SPACE AT TRADE FAIRS FOR "VISIT USA" BOOTHS. A 3 X 4 METER BOOTH IN A USDOC SPONSORED TRADE FAIR COSTS DOLS 2,500.

4. IF USG FUNDS UNAVAILABLE, AS PROJECTED REFTEL, SMALLER SCALE PROGRAM COULD BE CONDUCTED RELYING MAINLY ON EMBASSY AND COMMERCIAL OFFICE RESOURCES. RESULT HOWEVER, WOULD BE LIMITED EXPOSURE OF BROADER TARGET POPULATION. ALTERNATE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE FOR TOURIST INDUSTRY TO SUPPLY NECESSARY AMOUNT OF MONEY, WHICH LIKELY TO BE MODEST IN ANY CASE. FUNDING OUTSIDE USG MIGHT ALSO HELP ASSURAGE SOVIET SUSPICIONS REGARDING THE PROGRAM.

5. OTHER GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS INCLUDE FOLLOWING. US TRAVEL INDUSTRY WOULD HAVE TO DEVELOP ATTRACTIVE, INEXPENSIVE PACKAGE TOURS WHICH SHOULD FEATURE US TOURIST SPOTS BEST KNOWN HERE SUCH AS DISNEYLAND, WASHINGTON, D.C., NEW YORK, ETC. THERE IS QUESTION OF HOW PAN AM MIGHT COMPETE MORE EFFECTIVELY FOR SHARE ANY INCREASED USSR-ORIGIN TRAFFIC TO US. AND HOW WOULD ENVISAGED "VISIT USA" TOURISM PROGRAM WITH EMBASSY-COMMERCAIL OFFICE PARTICIPATION FIT IN WITH ACTIVITY OF US-USSR TRADE AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ON TOURISM?
STOESSEL

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